

Syllabus
GOVT 2306
Spring 2015

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Note: Please don't email me through blackboard, and when you email me, tell me which class and section you are in.

Also note: All of your work will be done and submitted through Blackboard. [Click here to access it.](#)

GOVT 2306-01 MW 8am – 9:20am
GOVT 2306-02 MW 11am – 12:20pm
GOVT 2306-05 TTH 1pm – 2:20pm
GOVT 2306-IN3

Dates: 1/20/15 – 5/16/14

This is the official information about the class from the ACC catalog:

GOVT 2306 Texas Government (Texas Constitution and Topics) (3-credits) Origin and development of the Texas Constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.
Prerequisites: READ 0310 and ENGL 0310.

Please note the prerequisites. By taking this class it is assumed that you have the basic ability to read and write at the college level. You will be expected to perform at that level in all written assignments and communications.

Readings: There is no text book for this class. Assigned readings are from online sources.

Why no textbook? There is so much information regarding government and politics online that there is little reason to use a printed textbook. Instead I have put Power Point slides together which I lecture out of. In those slides I also take you websites where you can find information relevant to the class' subject matter. Hopefully you will find some of these sites to be useful to you in the future. All of the readings in this class are available online in the pages you are linked to below under "calendars." When you click on these links you will be taken to separate pages with the power points slides. Here you will notice the bulk of the material that you will be assessed over in the class. Some of this is written in the slides, some you will be linked to.

You can access the class material and the Power Points by scrolling to the bottom of the page.

About those Power Points: The bulk of the information I provide to you is through power point slides. I find these convenient ways to manage access to class information. You will see that I have lots of them, this is because I treat them as book chapters. It also keep me from writing on the board. If you are a lecture students you will soon find out that this is a good thing. The slides are laden with links to different sources of additional information. In reality, this is the most important part of the class. I want you to become familiar with the

wealth of information that is available to you online. More than anything else - really - that's what I want you to get out of this class (in addition to the basic info about the structure of the government). Please make sure that the links open for you as quickly as you can. I use an older version of power point so that it will work on most - hopefully all - computers. Let me know if you are having problems. Some students need to right click in order to open them. I also keep them very simple (and black and white) so you can print them out if you choose and not blow your printer cartridges. I suggest taking notes from the slides, but do whatever works for you.

About this Blog: This is where I post items, usually on a daily basis, that pertain to the subject matter of the class. Every day we will spend time discussing how current events illustrate the principles we cover in class. The blog features a large number of links to the various institutions we will come to understand in this class. In order to better communicate, I want you to go to the page and subscribe to it. You will notice a subscription widget on the right of the page. By subscribing, you will receive daily information regarding not only what we will cover in the class, but also various other notices such as whether class will be cancelled.

What's with the Wikipedia Links? You will also notice that I often link to Wikipedia pages, the open-sourced web based encyclopedia. Wikipedia is often criticized as being unreliable and subject to manipulation. In some cases entries are edited by people who wish to bias the information contained in the article for self-interested reasons, but the site has become increasingly reliable, especially with relatively non-controversial or historical topics. I have found the range of articles available to be impressive. There is easily accessible information available there, that simply cannot be found elsewhere. I have found it to be very useful for my purposes. Perhaps its best feature is that it records all edits and allows for discussions of controversies associated with how subjects are discussed.

Here are some links that touch on controversies associated with Wikipedia.

[Dean's World.](#)

[EDUCAUSE.](#)

[Reliability of Wikipedia, from Wikipedia itself](#)

Grading

A = 89.5 – 100

B = 79.5 - 89.5

C = 69.5 - 79.5

D = 59.5 - 69.5

F = 59.5 – 0

Your grade will be based on how well you perform in the following:

1 - Quizzes (25%): You will be expected to take a quiz for each section in class. I want you to take them all, but will drop the lowest two - again provided you took them. The purpose is to ensure that you have familiarity with the subject matter we cover in class. These assessments will be given through Blackboard, so once again, please get an account immediately. The assessments are intended to reinforce the principle points made in each section and assess - objectively - your retention of those points. You can use the power points available on each wiki page while answering the questions, so yes they are open note. Check below for the days and times each assessment will be opened.

2 - Weekly Written Assignments (25%): Each week I will also post a question designed to encourage you to

think critically about that week's material. They will generally ask you about a current event that illustrates some aspect of that week's readings. These will also be presented to you in Blackboard - though the questions will be written out in the blog - and you are to send your responses through Blackboard as well. I'd prefer you to use the submissions box, but note that you will be timed out if you take too long to compose it there. I'd recommend writing answers out in a word processor then pasting them into the box. The assignments will be posted at the beginning of each week and you will have a full week to write at least 150 words (you should consider this to be a bare minimum) and be analytical in nature, based on the specific facts related to the subject. If you plagiarize your answer you will receive a 0, and this grade will not be replaced. I will accept late work, but all work is to be turned in by the deadline. You are required to turn all of these in, and I will not drop any of these grades.

These will also be averaged with the three assessments you will be assigned which are described below: Critical Thinking, Personal Responsibility and Social Responsibility.

3 - A Written Report (25%): You will be required to turn in a 1000 word paper at the end of the semester on a topic that will be made available at the beginning of the semester. I want the paper to be a critical review essay based on some aspect of that material. I will use the weekly assignments to prod you to produce the paper promptly. Here are some links that might help you figure out what you are expected to do:

- [How to Write a Critical Review Essay.](#)
- [How to Write an Essay.](#)
- [What is an Essay.](#)
- [How to Write an A+ Thesis Statement.](#)

You will be given the subject matter of your paper in the first written assignment for the class. You will be able to find it on the blog on the first day of class.

The paper will be evaluated based on a variety of criteria including, content, organization, grammar and spelling. The paper is to follow MLA guidelines. These can be found on the following website: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocMLA.html>.

The paper is to have a clearly defined thesis statement and at least three sources.

The ACC writing center can also assist you with formatting issues. Send me your report by the date listed below. You must submit the paper in Blackboard. The assignment will be evaluated based on three criteria. First, did it meet the requirements of the assignment? Second, was it organized well? And third, are the mechanics of the paper (spelling, grammar, and whatever else applies) proper? Please follow the instructions provided to upload your paper.

4 - A Cumulative Final (25%): If you are a lecture student, you will be given your final on the assigned day in class. You will be expected to bring a Scantron and a number 2 pencil. The test will be composed of at least 100 multiple choice questions drawn from the subject matter covered the entire term. If you are an online student, the test will be opened the last day of the final period for 24 hours. You can open it at any time during that period, and will then have 2 hours to finish it.

About those Assessments

The state of Texas has recently decided to add a variety of assessment instruments in order to ensure that college students are in fact learning what the state wants them to learn. There are four such assessments that

are to be applied in government classes and these are described below. These are integrated into the class material.

Writing Assignment: You've probably noticed that every class requires you to produce a written report. This is because writing is a hugely important skill - something that can distinguish you from your peers. Along with analytical skills, it's the most important thing you can learn in college, and a central component of higher education. The 1000 word report covers this requirement. Remember that this is to also be turned into the school, in addition to me. You'll find the place to do so on Blackboard.

Critical Thinking: Along with analytical and communications skills, the ability to think critically is argued to be an essential component of a college education. It is expected that all ACC classes contain a critical thinking component, which are then evaluated by testing a randomly selected group of students who have finished at least 30 credit hours. You may be selected to be tested, you may not be, but we will discuss critical approaches to class issues from time to time.

In case you are wondering what critical thinking is, here are some websites which may be able to help you - and me - figure that out:

- Wikipedia: [Critical Thinking](#).
- [Criticalthinking.org](#).
- Coursera: [Critical Thinking in Global Challenges](#).
- You Tube: [Critical Thinking](#).

The Coursera link offers the following - in my opinion reasonable - definition of critical thinking: "Critical thinking is the ability to gather and assess information and evidence in a balanced and reflective way to reach conclusions that are justified by reasoned argument based on the available evidence. Critical thinking is a key skill in the information age, valuable in all disciplines and professions."

Personal Responsibility: The state of Texas expects that by taking this class, students will be able to "demonstrate the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision making." Here is another way to put this: By the end of the semester, "students will be familiar with the concept of ethical decision making in addition to its complexities, as well as the ethical dilemmas that present themselves in various disciplines taught at ACC. They will understand how decisions impact these ethical dilemmas."

This will be assessed later in the semester with in a written assignment which presents you with an ethical dilemma. A rubric will be provided that will establish how well you understand the ethical issues posed by the question.

Social Responsibility: The state of Texas also expects that you will learn about social responsibility during the course of this class. Specifically this means that you "will understand the importance of making a personal investment in the well-being of others, the community and/or planet while showing respect for the beliefs of others."

As with personal responsibility you will be presented with a written assignment later this semester that will be based on this issue question.

Student Behavior: You are adults and will be expected to act accordingly. For online students this means that I expect you to do your own work. You will not ask anyone else to write papers for you, or you will not simply copy text from various sources and tell me you did it. Turnitin, and other techniques will be used to determine

if you have plagiarized. Among the Founders, proper behavior was considered to be a necessary mark of a civilized person and a requirement for political participation.

Read through Washington's Rules for Civility and Decent Behavior. It is a great example. Consider adopting a few.

Please Note: If you have any disabilities or other special needs that will affect your ability to learn in this class, please inform me. Appropriate steps will be taken to make reasonable accommodations and assistance with your needs.

Scholastic Dishonesty: If you cheat in any way in this class and are caught, you will fail the course. Do not download items from the internet and pass them off as your own. If you do so, you will receive a zero for that paper or assignment and that grade will be final. If you do it a second time, you risk failing the course, or receiving a sanction for your actions.

Incompletes: I do allow students to take incompletes provided unusual circumstances have arisen that prevent you from finishing the class in a timely manner. Unless there is an overwhelmingly good reason to take the incomplete -- such as a prolonged hospital stay -- the grading scale is will be adjusted as follows: B = 85.5 - 100; C = 69.5 - 85.5; D = 59.5 - 69.5; F 59.5 - 0. This is done to be fair to the students who were able to complete the class on time, but could have performed better if they had also been given extra time.

Calendar:

Calendar
GOVT 2306

Week One: January 20 – 25

- [Why Do You Have to Take This Class?](#)
- [Defining Key Terms](#).
- Basic Facts about Texas.

Quizzes will be opened January 20th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon

Written Assignment will be opened January 20th 8am and will be due by noon January 26th

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Two: January 26 – February 1

- [Federalism - Nations, States, and Local Governments](#).
- [Federalism - Federalism in the United States Constitution](#).
- [Federalism - The Stages of Federalism](#).

Quizzes will be opened January 26th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon

Written Assignment will be opened January 26th 8am and will be due by noon February 2nd

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Three: February 2 – 8

- [Texas within the National Political Landscape - Political Culture](#)
- [Texas Declaration of Independence](#).
- [State Constitutions and the Texas Constitution](#).

Quizzes will be opened February 2nd 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon

Written Assignment will be opened February 2nd 8am and will be due by noon February 9th

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Four: February 9 – 15

- [Article One: The Texas Bill of Rights.](#)
- [Articles Nine and Eleven: Local Governments.](#)
- [Article Two: The Separated Powers.](#)

Quizzes will be opened February 9th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon
Written Assignment will be opened February 9th 8am and will be due by noon February 16th
Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Five: February 16 – 22

- [State and Local Legislative Branches.](#)
- [Article Three: The Texas Legislature.](#)

Quizzes will be opened February 16th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon
Written Assignment will be opened February 16th 8am and will be due by noon February 23rd
Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Six: February 23 – March 1

- House and Senate Rules.
- [Bill Making in the Texas Legislature.](#)
- [Area City Councils.](#)

Quizzes will be opened February 23rd 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon
Written Assignment will be opened February 23rd 8am and will be due by noon March 2nd
Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Seven: March 2 – 8

- [State and Local Executive Branches.](#)
- [Article Four: The Texas Executive.](#)
- The Governor.

Quizzes will be opened March 2nd 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon
Written Assignment will be opened March 2nd 8am and will be due by noon March 9th
Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Eight: March 9 – 15

- [The Texas Bureaucracy.](#)
- [Area Executives.](#)

Quizzes will be opened March 9th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon
Written Assignment will be opened March 9th 8am and will be due by noon March 23rd
Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Spring Break

Week Nine: March 23 - 29

- [State and Local Judicial Branches.](#)
- [Article Five: The Texas Judiciary.](#)
- [The Texas Criminal Justice System.](#)
- Area Judiciaries.

Quizzes will be opened March 23rd 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon
Written Assignment will be opened March 23rd 8am and will be due by noon March 30th

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Ten: March 30 – April 5

- [The Texas and the Budgeting Process.](#)
- [The Fiscal Size Up.](#)
- [Article Eight: Taxes and Revenue in Texas.](#)

Quizzes will be opened March 30th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon

Written Assignment will be opened March 30th 8am and will be due by noon April 6th

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Eleven: April 6 – April 12

- [State and Local Elections.](#)
- [Managing Elections in Texas.](#)
- [Article Six: Suffrage in Texas.](#)

Quizzes will be opened April 6th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon

Written Assignment will be opened April 6th 8am and will be due by noon April 13th

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Twelve: April 13 – April 19

- [Political Parties in Texas.](#)
- [The Transition from Democratic to Republican Control in Texas.](#)
- [Statutory Code on Political Parties.](#)

Quizzes will be opened April 13th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon

Written Assignment will be opened April 13th 8am and will be due by noon April 20th

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Thirteen: April 20 – April 26

- [The Temporary and Permanent Party Organizations.](#)
- Voting and Campaigning in Texas
- [Interest Groups in Texas.](#)

Quizzes will be opened April 20th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon

Written Assignment will be opened April 20th 8am and will be due by noon April 27th

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Fourteen: April 27 – May 3

- State and Local Public Policy.
- [Education Policy.](#)
- Health and Human Services.

Quizzes will be opened April 27th 8am and will be due by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon

Written Assignment will be opened April 27th 8am and will be due by noon May 4th

Late work will be accepted until Friday May 15 at 12pm – noon.

Week Fifteen: May

- Review.

Final Exams: May 11-16

GOVT 2306-01: May 13 10:30am – 12:30pm

GOVT 2306-02: May 11 MW 10:30am – 12:30pm

GOVT 2306-05: May 14 MW 1pm – 3pm

GOVT 2306-IN3: The test will be opened at noon May 14 until noon May 15.

All work must be turned in by Friday May 15 at 12pm - noon